



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Megan Forbes
Office of Response & Restoration

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NOAA, VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE ANNOUNCE PLANS TO AID CHESAPEAKE BAY CLEANUP ***Derelict Crab Pots and Fishing Gear Focus of Group's Effort***

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration, Virginia Institute of Marine Science and state and local governments demonstrated today their commitment towards eradicating derelict crab pots and other abandoned fishing gear from the Chesapeake Bay. During an event at The Freight Shed at Riverwalk Landing in Yorktown, Virginia, agency representatives highlighted an ongoing project to identify, map and assess crab pots and the stress they impose on the health and economy of the Bay.

The project named "Identification, Mapping, and Assessment of Derelict Fishing Gear in the Chesapeake Bay," focuses on recovering derelict crab pots, also known as "ghost" crab pots which are lost during storms or have been accidentally cut loose from their buoys by boat motors. They have a detrimental impact on the Chesapeake Bay as they continue to catch blue crabs and other important living Bay resources without ever being retrieved. In addition to the loss of crabs, ghost pots create a hazard for boaters by adding to the debris in the Bay.

"NOAA is proud to be involved in projects like this one that work to develop solutions to reduce the impact that marine debris has on our resources and environment", stated Brigadier General Jack Kelly (Ret.), NOAA deputy under secretary for oceans and atmosphere in remarks at today's event. "This project highlights the true problem of derelict crab pots in our Bay with over 550 of them having been identified in the lower York River alone. These efforts support the President's Ocean Action Plan's mission to protect important coastal resources like the Chesapeake Bay."

Ghost crab pots are a persistent problem in the Chesapeake Bay. Last year, during the beginnings of the Virginia project, crews surveyed and removed ghost crab pots from a creek adjacent to York River. Returning to the same site this year, the survey resulted in the discovery of new derelict pots.

"It is clear from recent studies at VIMS that lost crab pots can affect the commercial and recreational fishery in Chesapeake Bay. By sharing resources and data, VIMS and its state and federal partners will be able to implement practical solutions to this and other environmental problems" stated Dr. John Wells, Dean and Director of VIMS.

Working together, NOAA and VIMS scientists are forging ahead with the removal of these environmental hazards for fish, benthic habitat, and vessel operators. They hope to assist in the creation of an improved management plan and policy for blue crab stock in Chesapeake Bay while reducing economic hardship for working watermen and fishers and engaging them in Bay restoration with a particular focus on this ever-present marine debris problem.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices, as well as other federal, state and local agencies and private sector partners to support national, state, local and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. The agency is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov/>

NOAA's Marine Debris Program - <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

VIMS - <http://www.vims.edu>